

## ***This Week in Congress***

*April 26, 2010*

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." This week's headlines are:

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- **Legislation Will Preserve the Flint Hills**

I introduced the Flint Hills Preservation Act, H.R. 5118, this week, to protect the ability of landowners in the Flint Hills to use prescribed fire as a tool to preserve the tallgrass prairie ecosystem. The Flint Hills is a Kansas treasure. It contains the world's largest share of remaining tallgrass prairie, and is the only place where that habitat exists in landscape proportions. Each year, ranchers, landowners and conservation groups use prescribed fires to mimic the seasonal fires that have shaped the tallgrass prairie for thousands of years. Prescribed burning is an essential management practice for protecting the ecosystem, enhancing grazing land and reducing the chances of destructive wildfires.

Last year, a condensed timeframe for grassland burning caused heightened air quality readings in Kansas City and Wichita. As a result, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is seeking to regulate how and when landowners can burn in the Flint Hills by asking the state of Kansas to develop a smoke management plan. The legislation I introduced will allow landowners to preserve a unique ecosystem and manage prescribed burning around the forces of weather and other factors impacting safe conditions, without worrying about a schedule dictated by some EPA bureaucrat in Washington. [Click here](#) to learn more about this legislation.

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**New Health Law Fails to Reduce Costs**

On Thursday, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released its analysis of President Obama's health care reform law. CMS found that the new law will not reduce health care costs, but that it will actually increase national health care expenditures by at least \$311 billion by 2019. This assessment confirms one of my biggest concerns of the plan throughout the health care debate. Without cost reduction, we will not be able to achieve true health care reform that will make quality, affordable health care services available to more Kansans.

I am disappointed that this fiscally irresponsible plan was pushed into law despite overwhelming evidence of its failure to reduce health costs. I am especially concerned with CMS' warning that the Medicare cuts contained in the law are unrealistic and unsustainable. Our Kansas hospitals, doctors, and nurses rely on reimbursements from Medicare and these cuts will drive them into the red and jeopardize access to health care for Kansans. The fact of the matter is that we don't reduce health care costs by spending a trillion dollars and growing the government and this study just confirmed this. [Click here](#) to read my January editorial on this issue.

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## **House Agriculture Committee Holds 2012 Farm Bill Hearing**

On Wednesday, the House Agriculture Committee held its first hearing to begin development of the 2012 Farm Bill. The sole witness was Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. It is hard to believe that it is time to begin the process of writing the next farm bill, especially since USDA has not fully implemented the 2008 Farm Bill. The hearing was a positive step forward for the committee, but I was concerned with the Secretary's testimony.

The Secretary highlighted five areas that USDA wants to focus on in the 2012 Farm Bill. These areas include broadband, renewable energy and biofuels, regional food systems and supply chains, forest restoration and private land conservation, and ecosystem market incentives. While these areas are important to rural communities, I am concerned the Secretary of Agriculture did not think it was important enough to include the farm safety net in USDA's top 5 areas of interest. It is important that the Secretary of Agriculture be an advocate for the farmers and ranchers that produce our nation's food. As the Committee explores policy for the 2012 Farm Bill over the next year, I will continue to emphasize the importance of production agriculture and focus on areas that enable Kansas farmers and ranchers to be successful.

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## **House Approves Bill to Boost Veterans Health Care**

I joined many of my colleagues this week in supporting legislation to improve health care for our nation's veterans. Included in the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act, is greater assistance for family caregivers of seriously injured veterans and additional aid for rural, homeless and female veterans. The bill also extends eligibility for VA mental health care and readjustment counseling to active duty service members who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

During my time in Congress, I have stressed the need to improve access to health care for the many Kansas veterans who live long distances from VA facilities. So I am pleased that this bill will establish a grant program for veteran service organizations to provide transportation options to veterans living in highly rural areas. The Senate has already passed this legislation, so it is expected to be signed into law very soon.

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## **Working to Keep Bureaucrats Out of Health Decisions**

This week, I sponsored H.R. 4985, the Medicare Decisions Accountability Act. This legislation will repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board created under President Obama's new health care law. I am concerned that this board of unelected bureaucrats is being given broad authority to determine what Medicare benefits are covered and how much physicians will be reimbursed for care. This board's purpose will be to determine whether Medicare spending is beyond its budget, and if so, they will offer cuts to Medicare with very little input from Members of Congress as to what is best for the citizens they represent. This board will not be focused on how doctors care for patients – instead, it will be focused on meeting a budget. This will harm patient care, especially in rural areas like Kansas where access to health care hinges on Medicare reimbursements to hospitals, physicians, and nurses. The American people deserve better than an unelected board making their health care decisions for them.

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## **Congress Moves Closer to Sanctioning Iran**

The House of Representatives took an important step this week toward completing work on legislation that would put needed sanctions on Iran for its illegal pursuit of nuclear weapons. This week, the House appointed representatives to a committee that will work with senators to resolve differences between legislation each chamber has passed to sanction Iran. This necessary step will lead to an agreement on one bill that both the House and Senate will pass so it can become law.

The House and Senate need to swiftly produce a final bill that effectively targets Iran's ability to import refined petroleum products. Although Iran sits atop a wealth of oil and natural gas, it lacks the ability to turn much of that oil into gasoline. By targeting this vulnerability, the United States will greatly increase pressure on Iran to abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons not only threatens American troops in the region and our ally Israel, but it poses a significant danger to the American public. A U.S. Department of Defense report this week said Iran could likely develop and test an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of hitting the United States in just five years. We must not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapons capability.

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### **Congratulations to Emporia State Lady Hornets on Championship Victory**

On March 26, the Emporia State University Lady Hornets defeated the Fort Lewis Skyhawks by a score of 65-53 to win the 2010 NCAA Women's Division II National Championship in St. Joseph, Missouri. This hard-fought victory made history at ESU, giving the Lady Hornets its first ever women's national basketball championship. The Lady Hornets' victory also gives ESU their first national championship in any sport in 26 years. In 1984, ESU was crowned the NCAA NAIA Women's Softball National Champions.

This week, I introduced a resolution in Congress to recognize this outstanding and historic victory. The team should be very proud of its accomplishment and I commend their hard work, discipline and team spirit. I want to recognize head coach Brandon Schneider and assistant coaches Jory Collins and Kiel Unruh for their leadership throughout the season that helped the Lady Hornets claim their first ever national basketball championship. Thanks to President

Michael Lane and Athletic Director Kent Weiser for their ongoing commitment to strong academic and athletic programs at ESU. I also want to thank the parents, students, faculty, alumni and friends of ESU for their terrific support of the Lady Hornets team throughout the year. [Click here](#) to read more.

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### **Discussing Renewable Energy at ICM in Colwich**

On Monday, I visited a renewable energy company called ICM in Colwich. ICM was founded in 1995 by its current President and CEO, Dave Vander Griend. ICM is a leading innovator in ethanol technology and has designed many plants across the United States. While in Colwich, I toured ICM's facility, learned about their latest research, and discussed federal policies related to the biofuels industry. Thank you to Dave Vander Griend, Greg Krissek, and the rest of the ICM team for hosting me.

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### **Aviation Industry Strengthens Kansas Economy**

The aviation industry employs millions of Americans and contributes to the strength of our economy. In Kansas, aviation is especially important. About 20 percent of the state's

manufacturing employment is based in the industry and tens of thousands of Kansans work to produce the best aircraft in the world. On Monday, I had the opportunity to visit the GE Strother Field service facility located near Winfield, where many Kansans carry out important work on aircraft engines. I enjoyed touring the facility, visiting with workers and discussing issues related to the aircraft industry. Thanks to the many members of the Winfield and Arkansas City Chambers of Commerce who joined me during the visit. A special thanks to John Macaulay, Shawn McGrew and the GE team for hosting me.

I also had the opportunity to tour the Learjet facility this week in Wichita. Learjet has a long and distinguished history in Kansas ever since William Powell Lear decided to begin operations in Wichita in 1962. As a Member of the Transportation Subcommittee on Aviation, I have been fighting against a user fee proposal in Congress that would have devastating consequences on the general aviation community by adding burdensome taxes and fees on the industry. Thanks to David Coleal and John Dieker for hosting me.

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### **Speaking to Students at Wichita State University**

This week I spoke to students in Professor Melvin Kahn's political science class at Wichita State University. When speaking with students, I am often reminded of our nation's increasing debt that our children and grandchildren will eventually pay for in the form of higher taxes. The federal government is spending, growing and borrowing in ways Kansans cannot afford. In Kansas, a balanced budget amendment forces the state to make decisions about priorities each year. Unfortunately, the same is not true in Washington. I support a balanced-budget Constitutional amendment and think Congress should take lessons from commonsense Kansans and restrain spending. I went to Washington to fight for Kansans and our way of life, and I will continue to oppose reckless spending that threatens future generations.



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## **Touring St. Luke's South Surgery Center in Overland Park**

The St. Luke's South Surgery Center in Overland Park is a 125-bed facility offering a wide range of health care services, including state-of-the-art birthing suites. The Surgery Center operates in partnership with Nueterra, a company founded in Dodge City and now based in Leawood. Nueterra employs about 125 people in Leawood and more than 1,500 nationwide. The company partners with other surgical facilities in Manhattan, Great Bend and Wichita. I appreciated the opportunity to tour St. Luke's this week and visit about health care reform and tax policy. Thanks to the leadership and staff members of St. Luke's and Nueterra for coordinating my visit, including Kathy Howell, Dan Tasset, John Schario, David Ayers, Brian Levinson and Mary Lee Fortin.

The "Big First" Congressional District has 76 of our state's 126 community hospitals—the most hospitals of any congressional district in the nation. I have visited each of the hospitals in the "Big First" and I continue to visit hospitals across Kansas to learn more about the unique health care challenges our communities face.

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## **Dole Institute Encourages Student Participation in Public Service**

In 1997, the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics was established at the University of Kansas to encourage more student participation and citizen involvement in public service. The Institute was named after Kansas son and American hero, former U.S. Senator Bob Dole, who served his country for more than thirty-five years through public service. On Friday, I stopped by the Institute to visit with students and staff, and see the new exhibits. Thanks to Director Bill Lacy, staff members and student volunteers for their support of the important work at the Dole Institute.

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## **Web Site Recognized as One of the Best in Congress**

Staying connected with Kansans is one of my top priorities. By visiting my Web site, Kansans can share their thoughts with me, receive updates on my activities in Congress and access important resources. This week, my Web site received a Silver Mouse Award from the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) and was recognized as being one of the best Web sites in Congress. CMF partnered with researchers from the Harvard Kennedy School, Northeastern University, the University of California-Riverside and the Ohio State University to evaluate all 620 congressional Web sites for effectiveness in communicating with citizens. I was honored to learn that my Web site was one of only 135 Web sites commended by CMF in its 111th Congress Gold Mouse Project. More importantly, I was pleased to learn that my Web site is considered a helpful resource for Kansans. [Click here](#) to read more.

This marks the second award my Web site has received. In 2007, my Web site was also recognized by CMF for excellence in online communication. Thanks to Kansas' Brush Art Corporation in Downs for their great work in designing the Web site. If you have not visited

already, I encourage you to visit my Web site at [www.jerrymoran.house.gov](http://www.jerrymoran.house.gov) .

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### **Remembering Dylan Meier at KSU Spring Game**

I joined thousands of fans clad in purple and white in the Bill Snyder Family Stadium on Saturday in Manhattan for the annual Kansas State University (KSU) football Spring Game. This annual game is typically held to generate excitement for the upcoming season, but this year the spring game took on a new meaning with its dedication to former Kansas State quarterback Dylan Meier. At the young age of only 26, Dylan passed away this week after a tragic hiking accident. My thoughts and prayers go out to the Meier family during these difficult times. I commend head coach Bill Snyder for dedicating the Wildcats' 2010 season in memory of Dylan.

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### **Speaking to Students at Benedictine College**

On Friday, I visited Benedictine College, a Catholic, liberal arts institution with an enrollment of almost 1,900 students. While on campus, I spoke at the kickoff reception for the college's business advisory council conference. I enjoyed visiting with students, faculty and Atchison-area business leaders about the importance of small businesses, which are the backbone of our

economy. When small businesses succeed, jobs are created and communities are strengthened. Now is the time for Congress to pass legislation that creates an environment where small businesses can grow and create jobs. I recently introduced H.R. 4779, the Small Business Jobs and Tax Relief Act, which would deliver tax relief to small businesses, freeing up capital to hire new employees and put our nation's economy back on track. I remain committed to crafting and promoting policy aimed at putting Kansans back to work. Thanks to Dr. Don Hoy for inviting me to such a worthwhile event.

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### **Combat Air Museum Keeps Military Aviation History Alive**

Kansans have a rich history of serving our nation in America's armed forces. The Combat Air Museum in Topeka has been preserving parts of this history for more than 30 years. The non-profit institution houses and displays military aircraft and depicts our nation's military aviation history to visitors. On Saturday morning, I went to the Combat Air Museum at Forbes Field to flip and serve pancakes at the museum's celebrity pancake feed fundraiser. Thanks to Gene Howerter for inviting me to participate in this event.

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### **Crawford State Park Dedicates Three New Rental Cabins**

On Saturday, I attended the dedication luncheon for three new rental cabins at Crawford State Park, located nine miles north of Girard in Crawford County. This 500-acre park features a 150-acre lake and six campgrounds. Fishing, boating, skiing and swimming are among the favorite activities enjoyed by Kansans at the park. Thanks to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) and to Clayton "Bud" Walker of Pittsburg for the generous donation of construction funding for the three new cabins, now even more Kansans will be able to enjoy the great outdoors. I appreciated the opportunity to visit with KDWP staff and others who attended the luncheon, including Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins. Thanks to former Governor and current KDWP Secretary Mike Hayden for his hospitality during the event.

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## In the Office

Bob Bush of Hutchinson, Dan "Boone" Vidricksen of Salina and Rebecca Rice of Lindsborg were in with the Kansas Beer Wholesalers Association to share their thoughts on our nation's tax policy and support for programs to stop underage drinking. May Davis of Clay Center and Jordan Herbert of Olathe were in with College Sorority and Fraternity Leaders to talk about collegiate housing and infrastructure on our nation's college campuses.

Members of the Home Builders Association of Greater Kansas City were in to discuss the Kansas City housing market and the availability of credit. In with the group were Mike Brown,

John Moffitt, Steven Cowen, Tom Woods, George Schluter, Mark and Brian Mather, Travis Graham, John Rausch and Bob Frost.

Members of the Kansas Building Industry Association were also in to update me on the state of the Kansas housing market. In with the group from Wichita were Wesley Galyon, Tim Shigley, Leon Greaser, Thomas Baulmann, Bernie Hentzen, Gary Jeskie, Tony Zimbelman and Elton Parsons. Daryl Bixby and Mike Flory of Salina, Carl Harris of Newton, Luther Pennell of Manhattan and Chris Wilson of Topeka were also in with the group.

Greg Harrison of Shawnee and Corey McCarthy of Lenexa were in with the American Cable Association to talk about cable services and broadband expansion in Kansas. Harry Watts and Dan Strom of Manhattan were in with Kansas Farm Bureau and Connected Nations to share their thoughts about the National Broadband Plan and efforts in Kansas to accurately map current broadband infrastructure.

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In with the city of Herington was Julie Schlesener and in with the Herington UAS Flight Facility were Chuck Jarnot and John Morris, to give me an update on the work to develop unmanned aircraft. Captain Jim Cooper (Ret.) of Lawrence and Paul Robinson of Overland Park were in with the Kansas Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) to advocate for improved military pay, reserve retirement and widows' and disabled veterans' benefits.

Roger Holmes of Leawood was in with Celsius Tan to talk about the impact of health care

reform on small businesses. Kebbie and Debbie Young of Liberal were in with the National Federation of the Blind to discuss ways to make sure blind Kansans can learn, work, travel and live independently.

James Russell and Patricia Houston of Junction City, Angela Henry of Iola, Marcia Dvorak of Lawrence and Wendell Maddox of Kansas City were in with the Afterschool Alliance to update me on how afterschool programs make a difference in Kansas communities. Paul Carttar of Lawrence was in with the Social Innovation Fund to explain how SIF promotes initiatives that serve low-income communities in Kansas.

Annette Graham of Wichita and Julie Govert Walter of Manhattan were in with Kansas' Area Agencies on Aging to speak about social and nutrition services for Kansas seniors. Julie Pinkerton of Dodge City, Sandy Kuhlman of Phillipsburg, Karren Weichert of Topeka, Kenne Whitson of Garden City and Renee Farha Hahn of Wichita were in with the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization to tell me about the patient-centered approach and cost effectiveness of hospice care.

Phillip and Lynn Kelling of Overland Park were in with ARA Insurance Services to tell me about the harmful effects of the Estate Tax and to discuss other issues important to small business owners. Jeff Borchardt of Olathe and Rich Mandl of Overland Park were in with the Kansas City Board of Trade to share how pending financial reform could affect the Kansas City Board of Trade. Marica Braun of Miami stopped by to visit with me.

Several Kansans were in this week to receive a Capitol tour, including Jerry and Dalton Perez of El Dorado; Jess and Anita Thiel Levant and Phyllis Flory and Emma Bixby of Salina. In from Hays were Tim, Penny, Alex and Sydney Davis; Patricia Schmid and Lori Ross. Darrell and LeAnn Ploutz and Shirley Deiser of Kanopolis, Dale and Carol Thiel of Colby, Verlea Ross of Hoisington and Thomas and Karlyn Walsh of Paola were also in for tours.

## **Contact Me**

It is an honor to serve you in Washington, D.C. Please let me know how I can be of assistance. To send me an email, [click here](#) . You can also [click here](#) to contact me through one of my Kansas offices or my Washington, D.C., office.

Very truly yours,

Jerry